Geneva, 9 November, 2017 – For the fourth consecutive day, the World Health Organization's operations in Yemen have been severely hampered due to the closure of all land, sea and air ports.

"WHO and the other humanitarian agencies need immediate and unhindered humanitarian access to Yemen", said WHO Executive Director for Emergencies Dr Peter Salama. "The country is still facing the world's largest cholera outbreak and 7 million people are on the brink of famine, including some two million severely malnourished children. If we can't bring food and medical supplies into Yemen we will not be able to save people's lives."

WHO's supplies are critically low. On Wednesday, WHO was prevented from delivering 250 tonnes of medical supplies via sea. The supply ship could not leave Djibouti as previously planned because of the closure of Yemen's Al-Hudaydah's port. The ship was carrying surgical kits, anaesthesia machines, infant incubator sets, water purification tablets and other essential supplies.

"We are particularly worried with the low stock of trauma kits", said WHO representative in Yemen, Dr Nevio Zagaria. "We have enough for 2,000 surgeries but because of the escalating conflict we have treated hundreds of trauma patients in the last few weeks alone. If the hostilities continue and the ports remain closed, we will not be able to perform life-saving surgeries or provide basic health care."

The closure of the ports will also affect the response to the cholera outbreak. As of 5 November, a total of 908 400 suspected cases and 2192 deaths have been reported since 27 April 2017 in 22 of 23 governorates. "We have made progress and there have been fewer deaths from cholera but we will suffer a major setback if we don't have full access to all affected areas", said Dr Zagaria.

Providing emergency health services and supporting partners in Yemen is a top priority for WHO. So far in 2017, WHO has provided 1500 tonnes of medicines and supplies. WHO-supported mobile medical teams have provided 21 443 consultations. WHO-supported surgical teams have conducted 9300 surgical interventions.